

Middletown Open Space & Fields Committee

Minutes of Meeting

July 17, 2013

A meeting of the Open Space & Fields Committee took place on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Middletown Police Station, Middletown, Rhode Island. The meeting was called to order by Mason Hawes, Chairman

Member Present: Barbara Barrow, Nicholas Coogan, Austin Prendergast, Mike Richards and Ralph Thomas

Members Absent: Cheryl Boergesson and Ed Sisk

Ex-officio Members:

Present: Dick Adams, Town Council Liaison; Matt Sullivan, Planning Board Liaison

Town Officials: Shawn Brown, Town Administrator

Others Present: George Barcus

Note: The meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 19, had been cancelled.

Agenda

The minutes of May's informational meeting were reviewed. No corrections were required.

Old Business:

- **Exploration of Beach Conservation.** It was suggested that the focus be limited to Surfer's End and the parking area associated with that area.
- **Town Memorial Policy.** Awaiting Shawn Brown's review.
- **Review of Park Steward Reports.** The reviews were considered to be satisfactory and useful in evaluating each park's condition and needed improvements.
- **Properties Updates.**
 - o **Planning for Tibbets/Boulevard Sustainable Use—Update on Request for Proposals.** Shawn Brown advised that two companies submitted proposals. These were reviewed, follow up questions propounded and each made a presentation to the three reviewers. The reviewers selection recommendation to the Town Council was unanimously accepted. Shawn indicated the consultant's report would address such uses of the property as lacrosse, softball and baseball fields, community gardening and equestrian drop off areas. It would also address traffic access and parking. Shawn indicated it was important that the input of all stakeholders be provided and that the committee meet with the consultant.
 - o **The Valley—Moving Forward.** Shawn Brown indicated that the property, consisting of 45 acres, was purchased in 2000 in order to prevent development and preserve it. It was recognized at the time of the purchase that contaminants (arsenic and Dieldren) were present in the soil. He indicated that the brownfields grant that had been

received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was returned. The grant, which had resulted in the application of EPA regulations to the property and Department of Justice oversight, was unnecessary and that the issues associated with the property were better dealt with by the Town, working with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

The DEM is looking at adopting regulations to reduce remediation requirements that would allow trails to be made using mulch and gravel. \$185,000 is available for the building of trails. He is looking for input from the Open Space & Fields Committee with regard to laying out trails, indicating that work on the trails could begin as early as this year and that the committee should coordinate with the Aquidneck Land Trust in developing trails that would interconnect with the Sakonnet Greenway. He advised that \$10–12,000 were available for the planting of heritage trees, but that planning for their location could be undertaken only after the trail layout was decided.

Brown concluded by indicating that decisions on a farmer's market or amphitheater on the property would need to await the issuance of the DEM regulations.

- o Purgatory Walkway. Brown advised that the RI Department of Transportation was transferring its Purgatory property to the DEM to ease the construction of the walkway.

- o Other Parks. No updates.

- Water Department Property on Reservoir Street Opposite Loring Street. Mason indicated that he had contacted the Water Department and Aquidneck Land Trust. It was clear that the Water Department

had the right to restrict access and while indicating it would look at the situation, it was likely that the Department would continue to restrict access.

- **Beach Facility Advisory Committee Report.** Nick Coogan advised that the next meeting of the committee would be in the near future. At that meeting it appeared that the committee would formally recommend renovation of the existing facility vice razing and replacement. He indicated that the committee would work with Tom O'Loughlin to prepare the formal report to the Town Council.

New Business:

- **Town Administrator Recommendations.** That the committee evaluate properties that could become available for purchase as to their desirability as open space and/or parks. He also recommended that the committee examine the possibility of establishing microparks on the west side of town.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, August 21, 2013 at 5:30 PM in the Community Room at the Middletown Police Station, 123 Valley Road, Middletown.

Ralph Thomas

Recording Secretary